

No 21

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On Amenorrhoea

by

Minor of B.

Depot Mar. 20 1877

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1841

Dr. Chamberlain

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First Church in N.Y.

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A  
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It is more in compliance with an established  
law of this University, than from a desire to expose this rude  
sketch to the scrutinizing eye of the learned medical faculty,  
that I am induced to write a dissertation. Should I however  
in the course of this essay be able to add to that portion of evi-  
dence in favour of the superior virtues of an article of the  
Materia Medica in the cure of a disease, ample rewards will  
be obtained for the attention paid to, and the small portion  
of labour bestowed upon the subject.

But gratifying indeed would it be,  
were I able, and at the same time to do justice to my own  
feelings, to present these few lines for your inspection,  
without offering an apology, but the numerous en-  
gagements at this late hour of the season force it upon  
me. I shall notwithstanding endeavour to render it in-  
teresting, as it is my intention to reject altogether conjectu-  
ral hypothesis as well as analogical reasoning, and substi-  
tute in their stead the firm basis of experimental obser-  
vation.

In looking over the vast catalogue of diseases

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which at different times have seized upon the human machine, we are readily met by one of a formidable aspect, and which in every age has been admitted to be of very difficult management; it is Amnesia. This disease has been noticed by the ablest physicians which our country has afforded, and I think we may venture to affirm, that not one, after the most assiduous researches and repeated experiments, has found himself possessed of the means which he might at all times rely upon in curing this disease.

It has been admitted on all hands, that no class of medicines which compose the Materia Medica is more important, and at the same time so deficient as that termed Emmenagogues, and on this account a great deal of labour has been bestowed in experimenting on various articles.

This industry we are persuaded, has not been wasted in vain, but a fruitful harvest of practical information has been the rich reward.

We are highly gratified in stating, that these experiments have added to the class of Emmenagogues an invaluable medicine, which cannot fail in a large majority of cases to relieve this distressing disease. The medicine to which

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I allude to the Polyzela Seneca or the rattlesnake root.

Though my object in this narrative is to attest the virtues of the Seneca, still it is almost impossible to introduce its history and management without previously noticing the disease to which it is adapted, and also to give a short detail of the most common practice which has been pursued.

By Amenorrhoea we understand a total absence of the menses, or of that fluid which is secreted by the uterus periodically, and commencing at the age of puberty. This disease is divided by authors into two stages, the first the retention or amensic menses, and secondly the suppression.

By retention of the menses is meant their not appearing at that period of life which is most common, being interrupted by some cause and then considered as a disease.

By suppression we infer the interruption of the action after being regularly established. In some cases the absence of the menses depends upon a malformation of the organs of generation, a deficiency of the Ovaries, or an imperfect development of the uterus, but this is foreign from our purpose, as that alone which depends upon a removable cause

*[Faint, mostly illegible handwriting in cursive script, covering the majority of the page. The text appears to be a continuous paragraph or a series of connected notes.]*

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attention.

In the first place the greater or less of the action of the system is dependent upon the degree of action of the system, from a want of due vigour by which the new action of incubation is prevented from being formed. The action of the menses may in general be known by certain observations upon the state of the body about the time when the menses should have appeared, and being such as when a young at this period have been known from experience to be preceded by the coming of the menses.

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These symptoms are so accurately described by Doct. Cullen and Mr. Burns of Glasgow, that I do not hesitate in borrowing their words. They are aching joints, some of weakness and debility, a dislike to active employment, a pale or sallow complexion, adema, swelling of the feet and legs, various symptoms of indigestion, costiveness, loathing of food but craving for indigestible substances as lime chalk &c. and sometimes the skin is cold and flaccid. The breathing is hurried by any quick or violent motion. The heart is weak, the pulsations are, some in the neck and some in the

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also attend. When these symptoms occur in a great degree they constitute the disease called chlorosis which some authors suppose scarcely ever to exist distinct from the retention.

The morbidly affluents which has been mentioned, is stated by some authors to exist at times in a very high degree, and as belonging more particularly to the Europeans mentioned.

Some of the preceding symptoms occur more or less in every case of retention and in several cases which I have seen they have been well marked though I have never been able to witness a case in which the symptoms were so violent as to constitute the chlorosis. The symptoms which particularly characterized the several cases which I saw, and which were the milder forms of the disease were debility, derangement to motion, headache, pale countenance and diminished uterine action.

It will now readily appear from what has been stated, that a case of retention with very marked symptoms, and that the several symptoms which attend, seem to point out the mode of proceeding in effecting a cure. Such I am induced to believe is the fact, and in the first place it is most our attention to the general constitution, and secondly to exciting the action of the uterine arteries.

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These indications may in general be readily fulfilled, by the  
remedies which are laid down in some authors on the subject; they  
are daily exercise, but never carried so far as to fatigue the patient;  
the various tonic medicines, as Yucca bellaria, bark, the various pre-  
parations of iron principally the Carb. Ferri, and a generous  
diet together with the moderate use of wine. The stomach  
should be previously cleansed by a gentle emetic, which will tend  
to give a greater effect to the tonic medicines; we should some-  
times also a gentle Bath; and throughout the whole course of  
the cure attention should be paid to the state of the bowels, as  
constipation is apt to arise and prove troublesome. I have gen-  
erally seen the bark and iron administered in conjunction, made  
into an electuary and believe it a valuable remedy. These  
mean by restoring the general health will in some cases effect  
a cure, but when they do not we should resort to such medicines  
as are calculated to fulfil the second indication, that of ac-  
ting more directly on the uterus and thereby promoting the  
menstrual flow.

To effect this last purpose a vast variety  
of medicines have been used, but I have never seen the propo-  
sition of Uterus and Sulf. Pom. fail after the health is

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been improved by the means already pointed out, the formula  
is the following R<sup>re</sup>: R<sup>re</sup>: Sicciorina gr. xii (Make  
Simpl. Terri gr. viij) ix. iiss.

Two of these pills should be taken every three weeks, and as-  
sisted by warm bathing and fomentations when nature seems  
to be making an effort. By this plan of treatment no diffi-  
culty will in general be experienced in the cure of the retention  
of the menses.

In some cases a plethoric state of the system  
accompanies the retention of the menses and here bloodletting  
and regular purging should be the practice marking at the  
same time their effect on the system.

Various other remedies have been em-  
ployed as scanningy gamboge, and a strong infusion of  
Senna which stimulates the system very considerably, has been  
mentioned as constituting a useful remedy in this disease.  
Some not hesitating to purgative quality have been spoken of,  
and highly recommended as the Sassa in powder or tincture,  
tincture of Myrica, the India Sassa and the agelofoge.

Many local applications have also been recorded as blis-  
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as practicable, warmth to the uterus by cloths wrung out of hot water and directed frequently passed through the groin of the uterus and lumbar region generally.

The causes of dancing, jumping the rope, and riding on horse back have in these times been used and should we not be able to obtain the wishes, would we ever resort to the means which have been laid down. Then the uterine list may be successfully tried.

I now proceed to the second division of my subject, the Suppression, which is by a more difficult management, and more serious in its effects upon the constitution. We might readily ask, what train of diseases has not the Suppression brought upon the constitution at various times. We are told by the highest authority, that the men of female not infrequently die of this Suppression, as several cases have been cured by its restoration. We are also instructed, that in visiting a woman with any chronic affection our first enquiry should be, whether the function of the Uterus be exercised or not. <sup>11</sup> The importance in this is a very small importance in our proceeding to the treatment, for in some cases it is the cause and in others the effect of the disease.

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From the few preceding remarks it must at once strike the mind with a conviction of its claims to the most serious attention of the medical faculty. The great importance of cultivating an intimate acquaintance with the disease under consideration has been implied by Physicians of the highest standing in our medical science, and even in giving many consultations in relation to it.

On entering upon the study of medicine with practitioners of eminence in Vermont I often received their most observations on the ailments they frequently met with in this outlying complaint. This was sufficient to engage my attention and I resolved that not one observation should escape me when I should have the pleasure of attending the sickens selected in this University — This was not long withheld and I heard from the chair of Materia Medica, an unforgotten belief in the value of a medicine which has proved to be an invaluable remedy, and I accordingly determined to give it a trial the first opportunity that should present.

When from other causes than conception the menstrual flux is interrupted after being regularly established, we

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do not hesitate to consider it a case of suppression.

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The most common cause of idiopathic suppression is cold, which may be excited by fear and anxiety of mind &c. It may also arise as symptomatic of other diseases particularly those which tend greatly to weaken the patient, and of general debility of the system. Here the effect is often mistaken for the cause the bad health of the patient being attributed to the suppression of the menses. This should be observed and may be easily understood by strictly enquiring into the nature of the case. This disease may be also occasioned by such causes as operate more directly on weakening the action of the uterus, as excessive venery, frequent abortions &c.

When the suppression has continued for some time, and more immediately follows when induced by cold, periodical and forcible determinations of blood take place in various parts of the system and give rise to hemorrhages which frequently observe periodical returns; that hemorrhages take place from the nose, lungs, stomach &c.

Vicious hemorrhages take place also from other parts of the body as the hemorrhoidal veins, fingers,

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and from warts and the surface of ulcers. Many other symptoms are noticed in the system and require frequent observation. Some a burning long continued, &c. These several symptoms in various degrees, depending on the degree of the disease, are to be attended to. When the greatest activity will attend accompanied with heat and pain in the lower part of the abdomen, skin fever and a more burning pain and tenderness in the centre of the finger.

It should be remembered that the symptoms of the disease may take place in different states of the system; it may attend a debilitated condition, or occur along with a plethoric and febrile state. These are important points to be known, as they will influence as much in the curative plan.

In the first, or that attended with activity, a strict attention should be paid to the general health of the patient and care must be taken to proceed much in the same way as is laid down in the case of the retention, administering along with the tonic, when the various Emmenagogues which have been mentioned. In the second, or when plethora exists accompanied with much fever, flushing of the face, and pains in the chest and abdomen we should not give quinine liberally and abstract blood according to the degree

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of the symptoms. When in such cases the secretions  
are removed we may retire advantage from the administration of  
Emmenagogues.

When the menstrual discharge has been suddenly  
interrupted in consequence of Cold, there is in general no difficulty  
in restoring it by the use of the proper remedies, but cases  
not infrequently occur when this remedy fails, and the case be-  
ing immediately protracted, we find for other the most active reme-  
dies unavailing. What we are chiefly to have in view is the  
removing that intense constriction (I you allow me the ex-  
pression) which affects the uterine arteries, and to excite them to  
the due performance of their secretory office.

To effect this grand object, upon which depends the  
curing of the disease we have recourse to the uterants in the  
warm bath, warm semicupium, Stations filled with hot water  
and applied to the lower part of the abdomen or inner sides of  
the thighs, and selling over a tub of warm decoction of herbs, a  
voiding strictly, any of the exciting causes mentioned in  
these remedies. The whole list of Emmenagogues which have been  
pointed out should be tried to effect this purpose and I will  
swell the list by adding a few more.

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When attending the uterus accompanies the suppression of the menses we are informed that some success has attended the administration of the Tinct. of Cantharides commencing with a drop morning noon and night, and gradually increasing the dose till it amounts to ʒij or ʒiij in the twenty four hours. The most obvious effects of this medicine were observed to be an increase in the force of the pulse and a copious flow of urine.

Phosphorus has also been spoken of as likely to prove successful when there exists general torpor of the system accompanied with a low degree of temperament. From the power of this medicine it should be used with the greatest caution as the introduction of it very greatly remarks.

Before proceeding to the detail of the superior value of the Polypus Venica over every other medicine enlisted in the class at Cummeragore, I will offer a few pathological remarks which have been pointed out by distinguished authorities and which I now venture repeat.

It has been said and I think with the greatest probability that our ill success in the treatment of Amenorrhoea has originated more from unfavourable views in relation to the function of menstruation, than from the supposed inadequacy of our

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induced to meet the irritation. It is said that an almost  
 every instance of *Albugo* arises from some irritation, or  
 is caused either by the action of the virus and a result  
 goes to that formed in the membrane some irritation. The  
 latter virus is a more marked case of this mem-  
 brane. Hence it appears that the stopping of the mem-  
 brane results from the employment of the virus itself, first  
 in the formation of the membrane and secondly in its own  
 structure and growth.

The precise formation of this mem-  
 brane has not as yet been fully developed, but as to its being  
 generated and that too by the virus from cause, we have  
 - shown, and it seems to be so. It is also  
 stated that this membrane has been often seen brought away  
 in such cases. The rupture of this membrane then,  
 by which the virus are removed to their primary action is  
 necessary it appears to be a cure. It also appears evident from the  
 preceding facts that to effect this requires a medicine  
 is required which exerts not only a powerful local stimu-  
 - lant action on the virus, thereby stimulating it and in-  
 - ducing to it the power of throwing off this barrier if it

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crisis, or else removing that peculiar morbid condition of the vessels. With a proper regard to the state of the system, the *Ped. et. Ven. et. Scler.* will answer every purpose.

I deem it quite useless to enter upon the natural history and botanical affinities of this medicine, as it is a well known article and found in every apothecary's shop. The *Yonka* is a powerful and highly diffusive stimulant; its action is propagated throughout the system in a rapid and fruitful, and seems in the success to which I am here to apply it to revive the drooping spirits of the oppressed sufferer and appears to inspire her with the pleasing hope of a speedy recovery. There, I am very much too cautious to dwell on the virtues of the *Yonka*, but such effects have been too obvious to have escaped notice, and for inducements have been omitted. These pleasing testimonials to a herald recovery I shall endeavour to point out more clearly and satisfactorily when I speak of the several cases in which they were made manifest.

But I must content for a specific spray in this article, as it is a very valuable medicine in a variety of other cases where constitutional defects are concerned.



qualifier. As far back as I can trace its origin in the treatment of this disease, it seems that we are indebted for the discovery to Doct. Harlehorn of this City, some years since; since which time its virtues have been fully attested by the successful improvements of the Faculty of the Faculties and modern of medicine in this University—

I will now endeavour to illustrate its preeminence, by introducing my own experience in several cases during the latter part of last summer. In the early part of last spring a Negro woman about thirty three years of age was affected with an abscess of the abdomen.

Here our attention was first directed to the disease, which I am happy to state was completely cured, but a suppuration of the wound was not so easily cured, and which had continued during the whole course of treatment, as the progress. Though the disease was cured the general health did not recover, she was weak, rested badly at night, had shakings at breast, weak pulse, but occasionally a slight fever, glowing countenance and a most astonishing deficiency of spirits.

Being now informed of her situation, I did not hesitate to attribute her tardy recovery and the existing symptoms to the

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subjection of the menses which had now continued six months.

Immediate measures were resorted to, with the intention which were to keep the system occupied, turning at the same time the greatest attention to the general Constitution which called for notice. It will be well to notice some of the measures adopted and the result of the same in the *deracha* and on my suggesting this to my principles, it was readily agreed to make trial of its value. You are already aware that I approached the *deracha* in the full belief of its efficacy - It was prepared after the following formula -

R<sup>po</sup>. Rad: Seneka (crinis) ℥ij  
Squa Fontanae ℥xxx

Summe coctio per bull it be reduced to ℥xxij; some of the acetum, one or two ounces should be added to her it is wanting. Of this which I gave her ℥jss daily for two weeks and then increased it to ℥ij in the twenty four hours, no effect arising to forbid its continuance or increased dose. Under this treatment the menses very early began to manifest its efficacy upon the system, the patient becoming more cheerful the difficulty of breathing greatly relieved, and she now began to delight in moderate exercise, as

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means on hand each is struck by it every day. I commenced  
 in this charge which I was informed it all but a harm  
 than to the Seneca, I presented its administration. The  
 patient's health began now daily to increase, and with it my  
 success. I would now and then omit its use for  
 a week or ten days during the ordinary intervals of the  
 discharge and increase the dose about the time of its expected  
 recurrence, but never gave more than 4 grs in the course of  
 the day. The patient now felt much better, the  
 menses had not yet appeared but she was in the way  
 of continuing the medicine, I notwithstanding presented  
 it now, and ultimately my pills were resumed with success  
 in perfect steadiness. The menstrual course having used  
 the Seneca about three months. The first discharge was  
 quite moderate and attended with some considerable degree of pain,  
 but which was relieved by an Opium. At the next period  
 realising the section was completely and happily per-  
 formed, and now the patient was restored to the full enjoyment  
 of health, to which she has been a stranger for about twelve  
 months. This case alone would be sufficient to establish  
 the great and incontestable virtues of this article, but

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as it has been my good fortune to witness the like effects in two other cases, one of which was of an interesting nature, I will give them a place in this paper.

About the middle of the last summer I visited a negro girl nineteen years of age, who was labouring under this disease. Upon enquiring into the case, I was informed that early in the spring, and about the time that the menses should have appeared, she took cold by being caught in a shower of rain, and the consequence was a suppression of the menses. Her disposition at the time was, rather nervous, and a bath: and some febrifuge medicine was administered by the family. The health of the patient I was informed was variable, being sometimes tolerable and at others much the reverse; but in a short time her situation was such as to demand serious attention.

The family physician, a gentleman of no slender information, had attended her all this while, but was unable to cure either her general health, even in the slightest degree, or to remove the disease in question. At the time that I saw her, she was much debilitated, had a constant fever, head ache, pain in the abdomen, and a discharging

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pain and distension in the ends of the fingers. I did not hesitate from the existing symptoms to bleed and purge; this relieved the pain in the fingers and removed the fever, and tonics were also given to improve the health, but my attention was directed more particularly to the uterus.

Many of the Emmenagogues had been employed by the attending Physician to no effect, and I administered as many more with artifice success, till I resorted to the Stencha. It was then given as in the preceding case, the patient taking every other night two grains of Aloes, which kept her bowels in a firm condition. It was some time before any change took place, but by the particular attention paid to the Constitution, it ultimately removed the disease which was the principal impediment to the restoration of health.

<sup>110.</sup> The third case is not so uncommon as the former two. It occurs in women in about thirty years of age, who are not even chaste, and who have always menstruated very irregularly and imperfectly. She ought not to be a day or two before she should have menstruation which entirely supersedes it. This was the case in the present and of

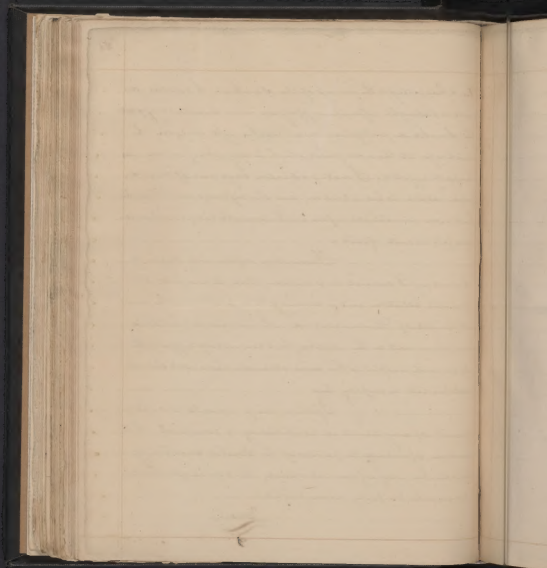
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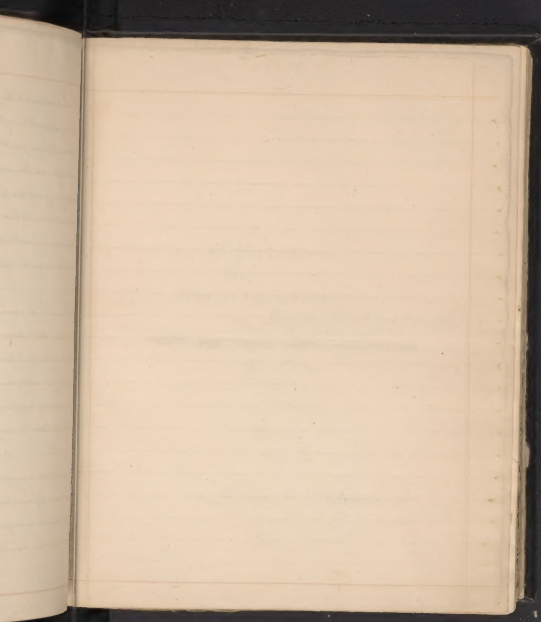
ter & has interrupted the success of the Seneka. I saw her about a fortnight after the supplication, and immediately gave the Seneka in pretty large doses that I might bring on the discharge at the next period, which to my satisfaction was happily effected. I made particular enquiries of this woman relative to her situation, and she informed me that she has never menstruated before with so much ease, nor had she ever felt so well after it.

From these experiments with the Seneka, I cannot but believe, that it demands the greatest attention and is deserving to be placed at the head of the list of Emmenagogues. I have never seen this medicine used in the intention, but can readily suppose it to be well adapted to the more obstinate cases and should not hesitate to employ it.

If these brief remarks should be found of any service in contributing to corroborate that position of opinion in favour of the Seneka, and thereby tend to the relief of one individual, the object of these pages will be fully accomplished.

Finis.  



28 also Call.    *Legatus*  
Shore -    *Bellus* *blakei*  
Minor    *Americanus*